

T H E  
L O U N G E R.

[N<sup>o</sup> LXXIV.]

Saturday, July 1. 1786.

**I**T is a well known consolation to distress, to be told of the like infelicity which others endure. Perhaps, therefore, my late correspondent *Mr Easy* may not be displeased to read the following letters, which will show him, if the relations of my correspondents are to be relied on, that matches of love, as well as of prudence, may have their disadvantages; that a wife's affection, as well as her œconomy, may imprison a man's person, may exclude him from his best society, and abridge his most innocent amusements.

To the L O U N G E R.

S I R,

**I**T was my misfortune to lose my father in a few months after I came into the world. He was a gentleman of family in the county of —, where he possessed a moderate fortune, and had married my mother not much above a year before his death. When she was thus deprived of her husband, she had not finished her twentieth year, and possessed an uncommon share of beauty, heightened and improved by every graceful accomplishment. Warmly attached to my father, she found no relief from her sorrows, as I have often heard her say, but in those cares, and in that attention which it was necessary to pay to me in my infancy. As I grew up, I became the sole object of my mother's solicitude, and she transferred to me all the affection which she had borne to my father. I was not ungrateful for all this kindness; and in my mother I found not only a parent whom I respected, but a friend whom I loved; one to whom I was accustomed to unbosom myself with perfect freedom and confidence. Except a few years, which on account of my education, we passed in town, we resided chiefly at the family-seat in the country. As we saw but few company, much of our time was spent in reading, which indeed came to be our favourite amusement. My mother's taste in books coincided entirely with mine. Though we sometimes read a little history, yet novels were our favourite amusement; and though my mother possessed taste enough to admire the elegance of a *Robertson*, and the simplicity of a *Hume*, yet we read such authors as a sort of task, from which we turned with pleasure to the delightful page of a *Richardson*, or *Riccoboni*. In this charming solitude my days glided sweetly along, and I never formed a wish to quit the society of my beloved mother, or to change the condition of my life. Before I had finished my eighteenth year, proposals of marriage had been made to me by several gentlemen of rank and condition. As it had ever been the avowed principle of my mother, that in that important particular a woman ought to be left at perfect freedom, she upon every such occasion declined to give any opinion, telling me, that as the happiness of my life was to depend upon the choice I should make, I had only to consult the dictates and feelings of my heart. Thus left by the tenderness of my mother to the freedom of my own will, I found no difficulty in giving an answer to my suitors. Respectable as they might be, they could not bear a comparison with those characters which I had been accustomed to love and to admire in my

favourite authors; and it had long been my fixed opinion, that without a certain hallowed sympathy of soul, a sacred union of hearts, there was a degree not of indelicacy only, but of criminality in forming the nuptial bond.

One day, as my mother and I were upon our way to pay a visit at the house of a Lady in the neighbourhood, our road led us along the side of a river, whose high banks, covered with wood, formed a most romantic and delightful scene. While we were admiring the beauties of it, some accident scared our horses on the very brink of a steep precipice; and in all likelihood the consequence would have proved fatal, had not a gentleman at that instant come to our assistance, and rescued us at the hazard of his own life. Charmed with the spirit of our deliverer, I had now time to examine him with a little more attention. In the bloom of youth, he possessed one of the finest forms I ever beheld, with a countenance animated and interesting in the highest degree. Perhaps the little adventure which introduced him to us, disposed me to view him at that moment with a partial eye. Little accustomed as I was to conceal the emotions of my mind, he must have been blind indeed, if he did not perceive that I was pleased at finding he was going to the same house where my mother and I intended to pay a visit. If the first appearance of the stranger pleased me, his address, and manner, and conversation, charmed me still more. In a word, Sir, I found in him all the graces of a *Lovelace*, all the virtues and accomplishments of a *Grandison*, all the sentiment and tenderness of a *Lord Ossory*. Sir W. Denham (for that was his name) appeared to me the most amiable man I had ever seen. I need not trouble you with a recital of the progress of our acquaintance. Suffice it to say, that he made a complete conquest of my heart, and that I consented to give him my hand.

Immediately after our marriage, we went to his family-seat in the country. There the tenderness and the attachment of my husband seemed daily to increase. He lived but to gratify my wishes, and I fondly fancied myself the happiest of woman-kind. Alas, Sir! what a cruel thing it is to have known felicity, and then to be plunged in wretchedness! I, Sir, am now as miserable as once I was happy. Not to keep you in suspense, I have lost the affections of my husband. Of this I have hourly the most mortifying and the most unequivocal proofs. The first symptom I discovered of an alteration in his sentiments, was the pleasure I found he took in other society, and in amusements of which I could not partake. When his country-neighbours come to visit him, he will sit a whole evening over his bottle with them, while I languish alone, neglected and forlorn. Nay, Sir, before we were many months married, he had the barbarity to leave me for a whole fortnight, which he spent in the Highlands, on a shooting party, as he called it. Not only does he prefer those frivolous amusements to me, but he even abandons my society, on a pretence that the management of his affairs requires it. At this moment, he is at an estate he has in a distant county, where he says he will be detained by business for several weeks. What is business or affairs to me, who would with pleasure have descended from a throne to make him happy.

I am persuaded, Sir, you will enter into my distress, and feel the justice of my complaints. As my husband is a constant reader of your paper, I hope that the picture of my situation may strike him, and lead him to alter a line of conduct which I own I am unable longer to endure.

Yours, &c.

LOUISA DENHAM.

SIR,

AT the age of twenty-two, I succeeded to a paternal estate of L. 2000. Soon after the death of my father, to whom I was indebted for an excellent education, I set out on my travels; and after making the Grand Tour, I returned to my native country at the age of twenty-six, and found myself possessed of a fortune more than sufficient for my wishes, with a sound constitution, a disposition to enjoy all the pleasures of society, and a heart susceptible of friendship and attachment. Soon after my return, a fortunate accident introduced me to the acquaintance of Miss Luiza M—. Although accustomed to see and to admire beauty, yet I could not help being forcibly struck with that of Miss M—. Beauty, however, though it may dazzle for a moment, seldom makes a lasting impression on one who had seen so much of the world as I had. But there was something at once interesting in the looks and engaging in the manners of Louisa, that attracted me with an irresistible charm. Even her artless simplicity, and her ignorance of the world, rather pleased from its novelty; accustomed to the *cateries* of Paris, and the society of women whose conversation, ideas, and manners differed little from that of the men with whom they lived, I was charmed with the *naïveté* of Louisa. In her observations there was a remarkable delicacy and justness of thought, often, it is true, accompanied with a degree of romantic wildness and enthusiasm, which, so far from displeasing, served rather to throw an additional charm around her.

I soon found that I was not indifferent to Miss M—; and having paid my addresses to her, was honoured with her hand. For some time after our marriage, I was completely happy; and would have continued so, were it not for one single weakness in my Louisa, which has occasioned much uneasiness to us both, and will, I fear, if not corrected, embitter all our future days. 'Tis of such a sort, Mr Lounger, that I have no term by which to blame it; I can only describe it by instances. When I went home after my marriage, my neighbours naturally came to pay their compliments on the occasion. Although I sometimes would rather have dispensed with their presence, which I could not help feeling as an interruption to that happiness which I experienced in the conversation of my Louisa; yet common civility required that I should receive them with politeness. One day Sir George Hearty, an old friend of my father's, and ever warmly attached to the interest of our family, came to dine with me. As I knew that Sir George liked his bottle, I, though naturally averse to any approach to excess in the way of drinking, could not help indulging the good old man in a glass extraordinary. When we rose from table, I found my wife in her apartment dissolved in tears. Astonished and affected to the last degree, I inquired the cause with all the impatience of the most anxious solicitude. At length she, with a look of melancholy that distressed me to the soul, said, that she found no happiness in any society but mine; and that if I loved like her, I could find no pleasure but in her's.

Not long after, I received a letter from the son of an English nobleman, with whom I had been educated at school and at college, and with whom I had ever after lived in habits of the strictest friendship, putting me in mind of an engagement I had come under when last in London, to show him some parts of the Highlands of Scotland, and to pass some time with him in the muirs. I immediately made the necessary preparations for this excursion, and not doubting that my wife would be happy to show every mark of attention to the chosen friend of my youth, I wrote him to hasten his journey to Scotland.

When



When he arrived, it was with pain I observed that my Louisa, so far from participating the joy I felt at the sight of my friend, seemed to sink in spirits in proportion as I was overjoyed on the occasion.

I left her in a situation which distressed me at the time, and the reflection of which damped all the joy I should otherwise have found in the society of my friend. I shortened our excursion, although I saw it rather disappointed him, in order to get home as soon as possible. Instead of being received by my Louisa with that pleasure which I experienced in seeing her after this short absence, I found her still oppressed with that melancholy in which I had left her. It is needless, Sir, to detain you with a detail of further particulars. In a word, I find that my wife considers my partaking in any amusement, joining in any society, or engaging in the most necessary and essential business, as a mark of want of attachment and affection to her. That romantic turn of mind, which at first charmed me so much, and which her natural good sense has not enabled her to restrain within due bounds, leads her to see every object through a medium very remote from the occurrences of ordinary life. As she is a reader of the *Lounger*, I beg you will favour us with a paper on the danger of encouraging this engaging sort of delusion, so apt to captivate a young and a virtuous mind, but which I find, from fatal experience, leads to much misery and distress.—Yours, &c.

W. DENHAM.

It might be supposed, that the *Lounger*, who has some how been led to confess himself a bachelor, would not be much dissatisfied at receiving, in such letters as the above and *Mr Easy's*, a sort of testimony of the inconveniencies of marriage. He must however declare, that they afford him no kind of satisfaction; nor indeed do the complaints of those correspondents induce him to think at all unfavourably of that state in which they have found the embarrassments they describe. Want of judgement in our choice, or ridiculously sanguine expectations from what we possess, will, in every article of life, produce disappointment and chagrin; and the situation from which the greatest felicity may be drawn, must necessarily be that from which most uneasiness may spring. But the relations of misfortune are generally exaggerated. From *Mrs Easy* I have received a letter, denying more than half of her husband's assertions. My correspondent *Alexander's* relation on the other side of the question, meets with perfect credit from me. I myself know several couples as happy as his *Euphanor* and *Almeria*; it is probably owing to the truth of its recital, that his letter seems to me not so well calculated for the entertainment of my readers, as those which perhaps borrow a little from fiction, to furnish out their distresses. The epistles of to-day, in particular, I have taken the liberty to read to some of the most creditable of my married acquaintance, who are unanimous in declaring the distress of which they complain to be perfectly out of nature.

E D I N B U R G H :

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